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## A MIDDLE-AGED LOVE-STORY.

THEY had come, a little group of friendly faces, to watch me off, with waving handkerchiefs and kindly good-byes; and I stood on the stern nodding and waving back, till the steamer swept down the river out of their sight.

I knew I should have their prayers that the great sea might be gentle with me; I knew they would watch the weather, and look for the telegram of the arrival of our ship; yet I knew I was taking nothing from their lives, and that they each would go home hardly missing me: so it was with no great wrench of heart that I saw the pilot put off from us, and took the last look at my native shores.

During most of the passage, I was just comfortably sea-sick, so I sat all the day long in a reclining chair on deck, watching the white caps on the purple, and green, and blue waves that mounted and fell, down and up, up and down, away out to the far horizon. I saw the shining nautilus float by, and now and then a whale or a shoal of porpoises, or a sail speeding white and full across the water.

I saw also a good many other things nearer by, for I didn't put my eyes in my pocket along with my short-sighted glasses; and nobody was much likely to mind a middle-aged woman in hood and waterproof.

The first thing I saw was a young girl with dark eyes and brown hair, that rippled itself into a tangle of rough curls whenever she took off her net. She was not so very pretty, nor so very brilliant, but there was a piquant charm about her that attracted half the passengers before the first day was over. By the end of the second day, everybody, from the captain to the ship's surgeon, and from the surgeon to the cabin-boy, was eager to shew her attention; and everybody was met by the same genial smile and lively retort.

She won her way at once into my heart by the kindly thought that led her to bring little relishes from the table to tempt my sickly appetite, and to soothe my forehead with bay-water and gentle

touches of her shapely brown hands, where a great emerald glittered, encircled by diamonds. Very soon she got into the habit of drawing her rug beside my chair, and sitting on the deck leaning against me, so that I might 'pet her,' as she said.

This was how it happened that my quiet, out-of-the-way corner came to be the centre of the life, and gaiety, and romance of the whole shipboard.

It seemed this young girl, Rosa Armour, was an only child, and an orphan, going to an uncle in Germany, her nearest of kin.

'Dear heart! I hope her uncle will be wise as well as loving,' said I to myself very often, for she seemed too fragile a bubble of humanity to drift on through life alone.

The tips of her brown curls were lighter than the rest, and here and there were little bright touches all over her hair, as though the sun was shining in spots on it. One morning I sat coiling these gleams of sunshine around my fingers, and watching a flock of Mother Carey's chickens skim restlessly over the restless water, thinking these thoughts about Rosa, and having her soft presence alone to myself for a few moments. Not many, however; soon up came a New Zealander—of course there was a New Zealander or an Australian on our boat.

'You are very lowly, Miss Armour,' said he; 'let me bring you a chair.'

'Thank you; I prefer to sit here on my rug, and have Miss Wells pet me,' replied Rosa, turning up her eyes languidly. 'The deck is my favourite seat, if I can only have an excuse to sit on it.'

'But you need something over you,' persisted the New Zealander, going away, and coming back directly with his own heavy gray wrap. Then he seated himself on a low camp-stool beside her, folding the wrap over the two. 'I never saw so rough a sea as this all the way from Honolulu to San Francisco,' said he, looking out upon the gentle swell of the lazily mounting waves.

'Rough!' cried Miss Armour; 'I am sure the ocean is as smooth as a mill-pond!'

'Oh, but not as compared to the Pacific—peaceful—it was rightly named. We have never such

gales on that as sweep the Atlantic, but only the gentlest westerly breezes.' The New Zealander shivered as he spoke, and drew his wrap closer over his knees. 'We have the most charming climate in New Zealand,' he went on: 'we are never too hot, and never too cold. In fact, we never think of the weather. And the soil is the most fertile in the world.'

'Pity it is in such an out-of-the-way part of the earth, that nobody can live there,' said Miss Armour.

'Beg your pardon, miss; there are several English towns of thirty thousand inhabitants each; and we never think of ourselves as being out of the way, but rather feel sorry for those who live so far off,' returned the other, bending his tall figure earnestly forward.

Rosa leaned her pretty head towards him in a confiding attitude of interest, and laughed: 'Oh, so you are the people, and wisdom is going to die with you!' said she. 'But what do you do out there in the heart of the universe?'

'We dig gold for one thing, and raise sheep for another—millions and millions of them; from thirty to forty vessels are constantly plying to England with the tallow and pressed wool.'

'What do you do with all that mutton?' asked Rosa, looking idly at the light in her ring, and then as idly at the light in the speaker's eyes.

'We use what we can,' was the reply; 'and sometimes, I am sorry to say, we bury the flesh—not usually; but sometimes an order will come to one farmer for a thousand sheep, if you please, and all he can do is to clip off the wool, get out the fat, and bury the carcasses.'

'What a pity the meat can't be sent to the hungry poor at home! Why don't somebody condense it as they do the beef in Texas?' I said in my practical way.

'In good time I daresay somebody will, but we can't do everything at once,' replied the New Zealander, looking with sudden interest at the game of shuffle-board being played beside us.

Just then along came the ship's surgeon, a blonde youth in uniform, with his hair parted in the middle.

'Miss Armour,' said he, 'the gun is to be fired at the bow: will you come and see it done?'

Miss Armour started up at once, turning the same half-confiding glance and ready smile upon him she had been giving us.

'I am going to leave my rug with you: I shall come back,' said she, beaming over her shoulder upon me as she took the surgeon's arm and went away.

The New Zealander looked after her, tried to console himself by drawing his wrap in another fold across his knees, did not succeed, and finally got up and went away. Of course it was not worth his while to make himself agreeable to a middle-aged woman in hood and waterproof. So I sat and looked at the likeness of a lake among the sunset clouds, and tried to decide whether I had better take oatmeal gruel or biscuit-tea for my supper; wondering the while, half unconsciously, about the old chord in my memory that was always being struck by a certain musical ring in the New Zealander's voice.

After an hour or so, the gun was fired, and presently Miss Armour came back with the disorder of the strong sea-wind in her hair, and its freshness in her pretty pink cheeks.

'I've come as I said,' she murmured, dropping at my feet again, and smiling up, as though she had got where she best loved to be—just such a smile as she would have given to the stokers down in the engine-room, or to the ship's cat. But it was lovely to look upon while it lasted, and we middle-aged people have learned to warm ourselves in any chance ray of sunlight, without stopping to consider whether it is likely to be perpetual.

This time the bit of sunshine did not stay long, for there came up an artist with his sketch-book; and when Miss Armour had sufficiently admired his graphic pencillings of the captain and the quarter-master, and the sea-sick occupant of an upper berth, it was time to throw the log, and so he bore her off to find out by her own eyes whether we were actually going at the rate of thirteen knots, or only twelve and a half.

That was how the days went. The passengers read and paced the deck, played games and guessed riddles, and were always hungry; the pilot stood steady and firm at the wheel; the sailors ran up and down about the rigging like overgrown spiders, and were for ever scouring and scrubbing, tying and untying, drawing up and letting down. Thus at last we had come safely almost to our desired haven. With fair sailing, we were only one day out from port; and fond as we had grown to be of each other, we were getting impatient to part.

Miss Armour, during all the voyage, had kept on as she began, beguiling every one with her trick of lip and eye. They ran after her like boys at the string of a kite. Well, they had nothing better to do just then; and when she had faded out, as a rainbow fades, I made no doubt she would be as easily forgotten, or only remembered as a midsummer's day-dream, by all, unless it might be a solitary warm-hearted man like the New Zealander. To tell the truth, I was a little sorry for him. Evidently, life had not brought him all it might, and he was hungry for the love and confidence that had never been his. So I was afraid he would miss this little sparkle of girlhood and warm youth, and find the void deeper when it had gone out.

To the very last day Rosa kept her place by my chair, and to the very last the New Zealander kept his place by her, when no one younger stepped in to carry her off; which was pretty often, to be sure. Then, he always quietly went away himself, with a kind of grave regret in his face. On this last morning, Miss Armour had just left us along with a young lawyer, to drop oranges and lemons among the steerage passengers, when I noticed the New Zealander looking after her with a sadder regret than usual—almost a pain—in his eyes. He had such handsome dark eyes! I could see that without my glasses.

'Now,' said I to myself, 'I hope he isn't going to get soft, a sensible, gentlemanly, agreeable man like him, and quite old enough to be her father!' And so I looked at him to see if he was, when suddenly he turned upon me.

'At least you might have written, Agatha Wells!' said he sharply.

I started, as you may think, to hear my own name spoken so familiarly by a stranger; when, looking again, behold, I saw beneath the bronze, and under the wrinkles and behind the beard, a face that twenty years before was the dearest in

the world to me—the face of Duncan Ashley! We parted one day expecting to meet on the next, but that evening he was called away, and wrote instead of coming. In the letter, he said what he had said before with his eyes—yes, those same beautiful eyes—that I was the choice of his heart and the desire of his life.

'Answer me,' said he; 'I cannot wait till I see you.'

So I answered—a long foolish letter, though there was no need of writing; for he had read all I could say long before, with those eyes of his. Then I watched and waited for him, but never saw him or heard one word more. If you are young, you can imagine the slow dying-out of hope and expectation; and if you are old, you know how such things can be lived over and hidden in secret graves.

But now, as though the graves had been opened and the judgment set, came this sudden reproachful question up from the buried past. I fairly caught my breath, as I turned back my eyes and looked him in the face again.

'Forgive me,' said he directly, in a gentler tone. 'I did not mean to speak; you brought it out with your eyes; that questioning turn was so familiar. Of course you were quite right, and I never blamed you. I never meant you should see me again, but the temptation to feel myself beside you, only to be in the soothing charm of your presence, was too great. It has been a blessing I shall carry with me all the rest of my life.'

He was rising to go away, but I put out my hand. 'I did write, Duncan Ashley,' said I; 'the letter must have gone wrong.'

'You did!—you wrote!' he cried, sinking back in his chair again, and looking at me eagerly. 'What did you say?'

'There was only one thing I could say, and I said that,' I answered, blushing, as though I had just written the letter.

A middle-aged woman in hood and waterproof! But, dear me! it was only my face that was middle-aged, after all; my heart was as young and silly as ever. And as for Duncan's face, the marks of care, and thought, and time fell off, leaving in it only the eternal youth of love.

It was the old story of a lost letter, and the older story of a proud man, believing himself rejected and humiliated, and fleeing to the ends of the earth with his pain.

'Twenty precious years wasted!' said my New Zealander. 'We will not be separated another day while we both live. There is a clergyman among our passengers, and we will be married this very hour.'

That was so like his headlong decisions! Certainly he did need a sober second-thought like me for ballast. 'That cannot be,' I cried; 'the ceremony wouldn't be legal without a license or something. And I would by no means do anything so sensational and conspicuous.'

But, bless your heart! I might as well have tried to wipe up the Atlantic with my pocket-handkerchief. He was so grieved, and so impatient, and so resolute (and, indeed, when one comes to think of it, twenty years is long enough for an engagement), that I finally dropped off my waterproof and my sea-sickness, and stood up behind the binnacle, and was married before eight bells that very morning—ring and all. Duncan pro-

duced it from a small pocket, where he had carried it in his waistcoat-pocket for the whole twenty years.

'I could never bear to put the little thing away,' said he, looking at it tenderly.

The next day we came to port, with the sun shining and our flags flying. There was a flurry of good-byes, a hoisting of trunks, a welcoming of friends on the shore, and a glad hurrying to and fro.

Among the rest was an instant's nestling of Miss Armour's lips on my cheek, and little cling of her hand in mine, the vanishing of a smile, and she was gone like the flash of a fire-fly, out of my sight for ever. But wherever she is, and however she fares, she has the daily blessing of two middle-aged hearts, whose way to each other she unconsciously lighted.

## RUSTY SHIPS.

DURING the last twenty years, a large iron mercantile navy has been in course of construction in this country, and for twelve years we have been building iron armour-plated ships, upon the hulls of which eight millions have been already expended. It therefore becomes an important question, how long these ships will last. Will the British taxpayer have to pay for replacing iron-clads at a greater rate than the comparatively inexpensive line-of-battle ships of the past, many of which lived and did good service for half a century? This subject has been forcibly brought before the public earlier than would otherwise have been the case by the loss of the *Megara* (an iron store-ship), caused by a hole having been rusted or worn through her skin-plating. The portion of an iron-clad under water which is covered by the thick armour is comparatively small, extending but a few feet below the water-line; thus, the durability of war-ships practically depends upon the same conditions as that of well constructed merchantmen. The thickness of the skin of iron ships varies from a quarter of an inch to a little over an inch: although this is all which keeps out the water, in comparing wood with iron ships the fact must not be lost sight of, that in very many of the latter, the hold is divided into compartments of such a size, that even if one were filled with water the ship would not sink. Besides this, all iron ships now built for the navy, and many well constructed merchantmen, have an additional security of great value provided by the *double bottom*. A skin covers over the inner side of the frames or girders in the lower part of the ship, so that if the outer skin be worn away or pierced through, the only result is that a small portion of the space between the two skins is filled with water, and the vessel is merely immersed a trifle deeper than before.

The problem of the preservation of iron is of a much simpler character than that of wood. The latter being an organic body, is of very complex constitution, and its various parts are held together in the tree by the principle of vitality. When life is gone, decay must be expected to come with death, and can only be postponed, not averted; by the various means used to preserve wood. The great danger to which iron is exposed is of quite a different character, and is caused by its affinity for oxygen, with which it unites to form various

oxides, all included under the name of rust. It is therefore only necessary to the complete preservation of iron, that it be coated with some substance which will afford the requisite protection against the oxygen in the air or water, and at the same time contain no oxygen which the iron is capable of appropriating. Such properties are contained by most paints, conspicuously by one known as red-lead, of which the basis is oxide of lead, and by many other substances used for the purpose of covering iron. The great difficulty is not to find an appropriate coating, but to provide for its proper renewal. As was shewn in the case of the *Megara*, the causes of corrosion are most subtle in their action, and most liable to escape detection inside the ship. In the best and most perfectly constructed ships, there is always water in the hold, either from leaks or drainage from above. This *bilge-water*, as it is called, is usually very impure, and contains strong acids, which act much more quickly in the oxidation of iron than even seawater does. An additional source of danger is the *scour*, caused by the rolling of the ship. The water rushes to and fro, carrying with it small pieces of coal, cinders, sand, scales of iron rust, &c. which wear away the iron or substance covering it, just as the waves and sand on the sea-shore wear away the rocks, only much more quickly, seeing that a ship at sea is nearly always rolling more or less. To protect the iron from these dangers, the interior surface is usually covered with cement in the lower part of the ship, and with a protective paint higher up, where there is little scour to be apprehended. In some cases it is necessary to fill up the spaces between the lower parts of the frames or girders, so that there may be a course for water to the pumps, and that no water may remain below the level of the course. In such cases bricks and cement are used. This circumstance gave rise to the statement which appeared in some of the newspapers about the *Megara*. It was said that 'there was probably in many places nothing but bricks and mortar between her crew and the sea;' the fact being, that where there were bricks covering it, the iron had been so effectually protected as to have lost little of its original thickness, while the danger was caused by a small portion of the skin, in an obscure corner, having been uncovered and unprotected. It does not appear to have been ascertained in what proportion the damage in that case may be divided between rust and scour, but the question is of little importance, since one remedy will avail for both evils. Cement not only protects the iron from rubbing, but keeps the water from it, and so prevents rust. The kind used in the royal navy and in most merchant-ships is Portland cement, sometimes mixed with a little sand. It is found to answer the purposes for which it is applied, and, indeed, its greatest defects are its weight and expense. Various substitutes have been proposed for it; one of these, used in the *Megara*, but long ago condemned by the Admiralty, was a mixture of clay, soot, bone-dust, fish-oil, cow-hair, and Portland cement. Protective cements have been proposed, requiring to have the surface upon which they were applied perfectly dry. This, however, it is not easy to insure, and no cement stands any chance of success which cannot be readily applied in the first case, and afterwards easily repaired. The extent to which the interiors of iron ships are endangered by galvanic action, is

yet a controverted question; but the Admiralty have deemed it advisable to dispense when possible with copper pipes, &c. in the lower parts of the hold.

The most important matter connected with the outer surface of iron ships is not corrosion; that evil has been in a large measure provided against. Many excellent compositions are used to protect iron from the action of the salt water of the ocean, and answer their purpose very well all the while they remain upon the iron. There is always, however, the danger of their being rubbed off by the ship scraping against some hard body under water; but in most cases no serious evil is likely to ensue, as iron ships have to be very frequently docked and examined for other reasons. More serious danger has been experienced from galvanic action, caused sometimes by an iron ship lying for a time in close proximity to a wooden one sheathed with copper, the galvanic circle having been completed by an iron cable connecting the two. In some cases, a great amount of corrosion has been caused in a very little time, by the action of a gun-metal screw propeller upon the adjacent imperfectly protected iron skin of the ship. The great problem, however, connected with the outer surfaces of iron ships is the prevention of *fouling*, caused by the growth of marine animals and plants. This evil is, as might be expected, most prevalent in tropical seas; but in all parts of the world where iron ships have been employed, it has been the great drawback attending their employment. In a few months, a ship will get so covered with animal and vegetable growth as to lose one-third of her speed. A plant known as grass-weed, and much resembling the leaves of long rank grass, will sometimes grow on the ship to a length of six feet. Barnacles are, however, the greatest enemies to iron ships. Other things may be dragged off by passing a mat over the immersed surface, or by other means; but there is no effectual way of dislodging barnacles except putting the ship in a dry-dock, and cleaning them off there. The female barnacle is the animal which clings to ships; the male is of much lower organisation, and much smaller than the female. The barnacle is, in the first stage of its existence, a free swimming animal, but ultimately loses the power of locomotion, and attaches itself permanently to ships or other immersed bodies. Various compositions have been put forward, which their proposers believed would poison the barnacles; but, probably from these creatures having such a low organisation, it has been found impossible to poison them; and even when, for experiment, they have been placed in a vessel containing poisoned water, they have apparently not suffered any inconvenience. The copper sheathing of ships does not, as has been often erroneously stated, keep clear of barnacles, because its oxide is poisonous to them, but because, as the oxide is formed, it drops off. This process is called *exfoliation*. It goes on regularly, and keeps a copper-sheathed ship practically clear of all animal and vegetable growth at but a slight expenditure of copper. The anti-fouling paints which appear to have met with most success are those which are intended to exfoliate as copper does, generally having for their basis oxide of copper. Their action has, however, been so imperfect in all cases, as to induce shipbuilders to look about for some other remedy; and that which appears to have



been most generally grasped at is to in some way sheathe the ship with copper. The great objection to placing iron and copper together under water is, that if, by mischance, any portion of the copper gets so rubbed off or loosened as to expose the two metals to the action of sea-water when in proximity to each other, galvanic action takes place, and at such a rapid rate as to endanger the safety of the ship in a very short time. It has been proposed to electro-plate the iron with copper. This has never been carried out on a large scale in the navy, most likely from the extreme probability that some small piece of copper would soon get rubbed off. Various plans have, however, been tried with considerable success, such as first sheathing the ship with wood, and then the wood with copper, care being taken that there is no metallic contact whatever.

In some ships built for the government, to be employed as cruisers and despatch-vessels, the arrangement has been as follows. A skin of wood was laid over the iron skin of the ship, fastened to it with iron bolts; a second skin of wood fastened to the first with copper or copper alloy screws; and finally, the copper sheathing nailed on outside all. Thus there could be no metallic contact, except as the result of accident or negligence on the part of the workmen; and, to make matters sure, the galvanometer has been successfully employed to ascertain if there was complete insulation all over the surface. In cases where a copper screw or nail had been driven in so far as to touch the iron, the fact was indicated by the galvanic circle being complete, and the danger ascertained was at once removed. These vessels must not be confounded with 'composite ships,' also designed to avoid the *fouling*, which is so serious a drawback to iron alone. In the last-named ships, the framework is iron, and the wood-skin forms an integral part of the structure, there being no complete iron skin, sometimes no iron-plating at all. A large number of sailing-ships were built upon this last plan a few years ago, but it was never much used for steamers, and few composite ships have been recently built except for the royal navy. This is in some measure due to the Suez Canal, which in so many ways has affected our mercantile marine. The voyage being so much shorter, steamers can be employed more profitably, still further shortening the time ships have to be at sea, and so giving more frequent opportunities of docking them and clearing their bottoms.

Zinc has also been proposed as a material for sheathing iron ships. It is said that the oxidation of copper being used as a means of keeping ships clean, why should not the destructive effects of galvanism be utilised for the same purpose. Zinc occupies towards iron the same position that iron does to copper; that is to say, if iron and zinc are put together in a galvanic trough, the zinc is expended, while the iron remains intact. If the zinc were so fastened on an iron ship as to be put in close proximity to the iron over the whole surface, it would last a very short time. It has therefore been proposed to have iron ships so designed that, over a certain proportion of their outer surface, a thin wood-sheathing may be introduced, and sheets of zinc being placed outside, all would in some places touch the iron, and in some the wood, and thus just a sufficient quantity of galvanic action would cause just so much exfoliation

of the zinc-sheathing as to keep the vessel clear. This plan has not had a sufficiently long trial for any conclusive opinion to be formed upon it, but it is said that, so far, the result is hopeful.

In discussing the question of the durability of iron ships, one important element in the consideration is, that by frequent careful inspection their state can be always ascertained. It has often, on the contrary, been the case that wooden ships have been pronounced ready for sea, and at the last moment, in the course of some slight repair, a mass of rot has been accidentally discovered sufficient to condemn the ship. It must also be remembered that no wooden ships will in future last so long, probably not half so long, as the old line-of-battle ships and frigates. Wood shipbuilding being now but a secondary affair, it does not pay to allow a large capital to lie idle in the shape of wood-seasoning for ten or twenty years; and it is undoubtedly the case that, unless sufficient time is allowed for the acids of timber to be extracted before it is used, decay very soon sets in. Besides this, in wood-steamers, the heat of the boilers, and the vibration caused by the screw-propeller, are found to materially hasten the decay of the ship.

Materials for readily stopping leaks are supplied to all Her Majesty's ships and to many merchant-ships. It is, however, necessary, to insure their proper application, that some competent person should be at hand, well acquainted with the construction of iron ships generally, and with any peculiarities of construction which there may be in each ship.

## A WOMAN'S VENGEANCE.

### CHAPTER XXI.—PATCHED UP.

THE drawing-room conversation that evening had been dull and forced, as the talk at dinner had also been. Both host and hostess were *distrained*. An opportunity had not yet arisen of discussing that momentous observation made by the representative of the infant school. It would have been better not to discuss it, perhaps, but Helen's conduct had rendered some allusion to the circumstance absolutely necessary. 'Tact,' of course, had been out of the question, as it always is when deep feelings are aroused; but she might have manifested more self-control. It was folly to have denied her husband the kiss of welcome he had offered her, and by accepting which she might have made one of reconciliation; worse than folly not even to have returned the significant pressure of his hand. For, after all, as he reasoned with himself (if the suggestions of wrath and pride could be called reasoning), what right had she to feel resentment against him for having fallen in love with another woman before he had ever set eyes on Miss Helen Somers? Did she imagine herself the Ideal for the manifestation of which in the flesh his soul was to wait any number of years? Ideal indeed! She had made an idiot of herself, and her husband to look like a fool. He had not been so angry at first as he was now. If she had employed the hour or two that had intervened before dinner in thinking better of the matter, and sat down to table open to reconciliation, even willing to please and be pleased, all might have still been well. But to Arthur, she had shewn only coldness, and to their guests that exasperating

cheerfulness of demeanour—forced, yet designed to appear forced—by which women exhibit their sense of wrong.

Such a state of things was insupportable beyond a few hours; a mutual understanding—or its contrary—was inevitable. She would probably introduce the subject so soon as they were alone, and then the thing would be got over somehow—it almost seemed to him that it didn't much matter how, so that they had it out. This would perhaps have been the case but for Helen's confidential talk with the rector, of which, of course, Arthur knew nothing. But as it was, she no longer felt that eager desire to know the rights of the matter as respected Miss Alice Renn, which she had entertained at first. She could afford to wait to hear what her husband had to say for himself; and when he did speak, she had data by which to gauge his veracity. Eager, too, for the fray as Arthur had been, while the opportunity was still afar off, his courage cooled as it drew near, just as a defier of ghosts grows less and less audacious as the shades of night draw in. He was by nature one of that considerable class of males, who, though not disinclined for excitement elsewhere, like quiet in their own homes, and the near prospect of a 'row' with Helen grew more and more distasteful to him. He was not afraid of her, but, as has been already hinted, he was afraid of himself: always distrustful of the amount of his reserve capital of affection for her, he was conscious that it had already been drawn upon to a considerable extent by the events of the day. He felt that his sentiments with respect to her just now were not such as ought to be entertained for a bride of but five weeks. He wished that this particular night, at all events, they were a hundred miles apart, and that was not a pleasant reflection, considering that it was the first they would pass in their new home. Perhaps she would feel fatigued with her journey, and be fast asleep before he retired. Then they would have no words about this matter, and in the morning, having 'slept upon it,' she would take more sensible views, and be herself again. In order to afford an opportunity for this desirable termination of the affair, he went on playing billiards with Allardyce for some time after his wife had taken her departure, and loitered away another hour in his dressing-room. Then treading softly, so as not to wake her, and opening the door with the caution of a burglar, he found the chamber a blaze of light, and Helen very wide awake, brushing her long tresses before the fire.

'I thought you would have been asleep,' said he propitiously; he was offering her, as he thought, a third opportunity of 'making it all up.'

'I am not at all tired, thank you.'

If ever a 'thank you' might be paraphrased by 'thank you for nothing,' that 'thank you' might have been. It curdled the milk of domestic kindness in Arthur's breast, by what photographers call the instantaneous process.

'You are uncommonly cross, at all events,' said he.

'I have reason to be—not cross, indeed, but hurt, annoyed, distressed.'

'You have no reason whatever. You have nobody to thank but yourself for worrying a village school-child with foolish questions, till at last she gave you a still more foolish answer.'

'A true one, however. You told me once that

you had never been in love with another woman, and yet there is a girl in this very parish who has reason to suppose herself wronged by my being your wife.'

'That is her affair and mine, and not yours.'

'What! yours, and not mine?'

She had risen from her chair and confronted him; her blue eyes lit with flame, her silken tresses flying loose about her shoulders—she had, perhaps, never looked so beautiful, but her beauty did not occur to him at all. 'What a devil of a temper this woman has got!' was his reflection.

'Yes, it is her affair and mine, and not yours; I repeat it, Helen. I loved her before I saw you; I ceased to love her before I saw you; it is *she* that has the right to complain of me; not *you*. You have won me, she has lost me. What the deuce would you have?'

'You are speaking of love as though it were a stake at cards. You think more of cards than of it.'

'Pardon me, madam.' (His face had grown quite pale.) 'I was speaking of the object of it, my humble self. As to cards (of which you so ungenerously speak), I gave up all thoughts of them, as you well know, when I married you—as of something else, more worthy.' Angry as he was, he felt he had said too much.

'You mean, of this same girl,' answered she swiftly. 'And yet you tell me you had ceased to love her before you saw me.'

'So I had. I am not going to be cross-examined about my past, madam. I deny your right to do so. Suffice it, that I have done nothing, so far as you are concerned, of which I need be ashamed.'

'*Qui s'accuse s'accuse*,' said Helen. The use of that conventional phrase, he rightly thought, was a good sign. When matters are really serious, it is only French people who jabber French. Was there not here some opportunity—slight, but still perhaps sufficient—for his making a clean breast of it? Not for telling the whole truth, indeed—for it would be madness to do so, since a woman in her condition of mind would be sure to give credit to all that told against him, and to withhold it from what was in his favour—but for revealing a good deal of it.

'You are taking up this matter much too seriously, Helen,' said he; 'I mean, even supposing you are justified (which I altogether refuse to admit) in taking it up at all. Every young man has his flirtations, of course, and I had mine. This with Jenny Wren was one of them. Perhaps you do not know that she was the daughter of the man that kept the *Welcome*?'

'You would have me believe it was a mere vulgar *liaison*,' exclaimed Helen passionately.

'I would *not*,' said Arthur quickly, and with a sudden flash in his cheek; 'I would not do the girl such wrong. We were very young—both of us—at the time, and we did not take into account the barriers that society has interposed against such alliances. Undoubtedly, we thought of marriage, but only as children think to be always lovers; in reality, it was impracticable and out of the question. It might not have seemed so to the village people, who are always eager to believe in such romances, and that is doubtless how the idea got about which you heard to-day. But I don't believe Jenny—I mean Alice Renn—ever refused to teach the girls that song out of jealousy or

pique. You are not fit to live in the country, I assure you, if you are so sensitive to gossip.' While he was about it, it struck him that he would throw in a precautionary hint for future contingencies; but, unhappily, this was lost upon her; there *are* times when a woman does stick to the subject of discussion.

'You call this girl Jenny, or Alice, indifferently, it seems; but others call her *Miss* Alice. Why is that, if she is an innkeeper's daughter?'

'All these matters are relative, my dear. Here you yourself are a great lady, whereas in London you were nobody very particular.' (There's one for the *Hops*, thought he, and he laughed in the sleeve of his dressing-gown to see her wince.) 'In this little village, old Jacob Renn has a certain position; he is rich and respected; and they call his daughter "*Miss*."

'Then she is not really "a lady" in her manners or ways of thought?'

Her eyes were riveted on him with earnest steadiness, but he little knew with what interest she waited for his reply. The description of Jenny as given by the rector was fresh in her mind. Fixed as her thoughts had been, throughout the late conversation with Mr Glyddon, upon the relations between this girl and Arthur, it had never struck her that there might be a personal reason for the rector's eulogies. She had taken it for granted that they were deserved, and generally known to be so. She was now about to learn, by proof, whether Arthur was bent on deceiving her or not. He did not answer for a moment; his mind was wavering; he was ashamed to depreciate Jenny for the sake of propitiating Helen; he was half-inclined to break out with: 'Yes; a true gentlewoman; one who would never stoop to such contemptible behaviour as that of which *you*, madam, are now guilty;' but prudence restrained him.

'Well, "a lady" is so vague a term. I thought her a lady when I wooed her as a boy; but I dare say I was not much of a judge.'

'Was she well educated?' faltered Helen. The hope that she was going to learn the truth from Arthur's lips was dying within her. He had already equivocated with her. Would he tell her a lie?

'Educated?' replied Arthur; 'how could the poor girl be educated? Certainly not. She knew next to nothing.'

He was quite glad to be able to speak the truth this time. When he had fallen in love with Jenny, she had been wise, and good, and beautiful, and certainly 'a lady' in her ways and manner, but of mere books she knew but little. It was in order to divert her mind from dwelling upon her lover in his absence, and—later, when the thought that he had forgotten her began to take hold of it—to prevent despondency, that she had given herself up to study. He did not know what the rector knew, and, unhappily, their respective statements were incompatible.

'That is false, and you know it!' cried Helen.

'What is false?' ('This infernal woman will drive me mad,' thought Arthur.)

'All you have been telling me from first to last,' replied she furiously. 'You loved this girl when you asked me to marry you, and you love her still! I heard all about her this very evening from Mr Glyddon.'

Priests may keep *their* share of the burden of

secrecy, but what is the use, when the other bearer of it is an angry woman? It is like a conscientious player at see-saw, who continues to sit on his end of the plank while the other is empty and in the air.

'Oh, Glyddon told you, did he? Then I suppose you asked him?'

'Certainly, I did.'

'And that is your notion of a wife's duty, is it? To ask a priest to tell you lies against your husband, and then to believe them! I thought that all these High-church crotchets of yours were harmless follies; but it seems they are much worse. That the parson has made a fool of you is only what was to have been expected, for, if I am not much mistaken, he is in love with this girl himself.'

'O Arthur, I never thought of that!' exclaimed Helen, terrified at her husband's tone, which was harsh and grating; different altogether from what she had ever heard it; nor, indeed, had either man or woman heard him speak so before.

'I can believe you there,' continued he bitterly. 'You thought of nothing but the gratification of a mean curiosity; you wished to pander to a miserable sense of jealousy, for which your conscience told you you had no excuse. Madam, I wish you good-night.'

He had closed the door behind him, and was gone into his dressing-room, before she could interpose a word. What had she said, what had she done, to provoke such a catastrophe as this? At first, she was indignant beyond measure. She had done nothing, she had said nothing, save what the circumstances of the case had demanded. It was only right that she should make herself acquainted with Arthur's antecedents in the village, in order that things should go smoothly, and for her due administration (as 'Lady Bountiful') of parochial affairs. To be sure, that idea had not struck her before (perhaps because it was a reasonable one), but she made a note of it now, though it was a little late. It was only natural that she should have applied for information on such a point to the clergyman of the parish. It was unfortunate, indeed, that he should have been in love with this girl (for that he *was* so seemed likely enough, now she came to reflect upon his manner as well as words, and how he had resented the suggestion that had impugned the girl's character); but not knowing that, it, of course, followed that she had believed all he said of her. 'Mean curiosity,' forsooth, and 'miserable sense of jealousy!' She had a right to be curious, and (for that matter) to be jealous too. She had little thought her Arthur had such a temper, or could be so easily put out. The idea of his slamming the door like that, after wishing her 'good-night' so coolly! Was it possible that he really meant to sleep in the dressing-room? What would the servants say?

The clock on the mantel-piece struck two. 'Well, the servants must be all in bed; that was one comfort.' There was little else to comfort her. The fire burnt brightly, and the room was well lit and cheerfully furnished, but she felt cold and wretched. If she went to bed, she well knew it would not be to sleep. No; she would sit up, and presently he would come back again, and beg her pardon. An hour passed—the first half in expectation, the last in apprehension. When the mountain did not move at Mohammed's bidding, he went to the mountain; Helen followed (without knowing it)

his sensible example. At three o'clock, she rose, and knocked at the dressing-room door. 'Arthur!' said she softly.

No answer. Great Heaven! had he done something dreadful?—cut his throat, perhaps—unable to bear the recollection of her unkindness! She had been hard upon him, poor fellow; and now she might have cause to repent it all her days. She almost expected to see his life's blood oozing under the door; but it was not; so she ventured, with trembling hand, to knock again.

'Arthur! Arthur dear!' cried she, a little louder. 'Well, what is it? Come in.' She was reassured by his voice, which, though a little gruff (and, to say truth, grumpy), did not give any sign of a severed jugular vein. She opened the door, and found him lying outside the little couch in his dressing-gown, and reading the *Pickwick Papers*.

This was better than suicide, but rather too much (so to speak) in the other direction. Nevertheless, it was in a very plaintive voice that she inquired: 'Are you not coming to your own room, Arthur?'

'Well, I have been driven out of it. You made such a dam'—(my belief is that he was going to say 'fool of yourself,' but there was that in her face which softened him) 'such a damaging exposure of temper, that I am quite afraid of you.'

'I am sorry to have made you angry, Arthur.'

He got up and took her hand. 'Nay, my dear, I am sorry too, to have made you angry—so very angry about nothing at all.'

Here Helen distilled a tear or two, not of penitence, it must be owned, only a few drops of that unpated elixir which women always keep by them to melt the stony hearts of men.

'Don't cry, pray, don't, my darling,' pleaded he, overcome by this unexpected weapon. 'I know I was very cross to you; I am afraid I behaved like a brute.'

She did not deny it, but put up her fair cheek for him to kiss. It was a little damp, but he was very glad to kiss it.

'And you won't be jealous about nothing again, darling, will you?'

She answered 'No,' of course; but he, on his part, made up his mind to be even more cautious as respected Jenny than he had intended to be; and she, on hers, made up her mind to look most uncommonly sharp after this 'young person,' who had thus already 'come between' her Arthur and herself.

And so the quarrel was made up for that time; but it was not a good beginning of their domestic life at home, and ominous of ill for its future.

#### CHAPTER XXII.—THE WATCH-DOG.

Weeks and months went by at Swansdale without much event to mark them. The newly married pair were received with all the gracious hospitality to which Helen had looked forward; and the Hon. Wynn Allardyce was asked wherever they were asked. His position began to be recognised as 'a friend of the family,' or, rather, as the French say, 'of the house.' For he staid within doors a good deal. He did not care for field-sports; and when Arthur went with the hounds, or out shooting, he, as often as not, staid at home with Helen. Arthur did not mind this at all, for he had no wish for Lardy's company. Yet somebody he had always with him. He had formed a steady resolution

not to give himself an opportunity of meeting Jenny alone. He had met her, when walking with his wife and Allardyce, and bowed to her; but they had never interchanged a word. She played the organ at church, but the curtain always concealed her; he had caught himself looking up at it at times, when he thought Helen was not looking, and once or twice she had been looking, which was very unpleasant. Helen had extracted a promise from him that he should not take Mr Glyddon to task for having answered her inquiries with respect to his old attachment; and this had a bad effect; for he could not help feeling aggrieved with the rector, and shewing that he felt so; and this was naturally enough set down to another cause. 'He is angry with me,' thought Mr Glyddon bitterly, 'because he suspects that I love the woman that he has deserted, and who, for his sake, even now refuses to listen to my suit.'

So, though there was no open rupture, the squire and the parson of Swansdale were not on good terms with one another; and the supposed reason why got, in course of time, to be whispered in the village, and at last reached Helen's ears. She did not speak of it to Arthur, but it rankled in her mind, and made her cold to him. To some husbands, this would not have much mattered. There are many respectable couples who live together amicably enough, not only without any demonstrativeness of affection, but in a state of armed neutrality; but to a man of Arthur Tyndall's temperament, such a state of things was very irritating. He sometimes took his gun and went out, not to kill birds, but time, and because home was intolerable. Then Mr Wynn Allardyce would redouble his efforts to make himself agreeable to his friend's deserted wife, and to some extent succeeded. He did not succeed in making himself agreeable to his friend's uncle, and yet, five times out of six, when his hostess and himself were in the drawing-room alone together, playing duets (for he was a pretty good pianist, and indeed, was an accomplished man in many ways) or chess, or engaged in some other innocent amusement, up would come Uncle Magus from the cottage, and sit with them until Arthur came home again.

'Here comes that fine old Irish gentleman again,' said Allardyce peevishly, looking out of the drawing-room window, on one occasion, when Arthur was out in the stubbles, and Mrs Tyndall and himself were playing at backgammon.

'Poor Uncle Magus! I daresay he feels dull all alone in his damp little bower,' said Helen pitifully. She had taken to the old man, ever since she had learned that he had picked a quarrel with Mr Paul Jones on her account. 'It is a pleasant change for him to come up here, no doubt; and I do believe he is very fond of me.'

'I don't think that is to his credit,' said Allardyce.

'Well, upon my word, that is a very civil speech, sir,' and she tapped him sharply on the fingers with the caster; there was only one caster, the other having been lost, so that they had to pass it over to one another in turn. If Allardyce's fingers met her own by accident, sometimes, when this interchange took place, he did not now apologise for it, as he used to do at first.

'I mean to say he could not help being fond of you, and therefore deserves no commendation,' explained Allardyce; he was looking fixedly at the



board, as though in contemplation of his 'move,' and did not dare to raise his eyes from it, yet he would have given much to know if she were blushing.

'I wish that were the case,' said she, with no blush, but with a little sigh; 'I mean that everybody was fond of me.'

'Well, you don't expect the women to be so,' laughed Allardyce; 'that would be too much. We are told to love our enemies, but even the Scripture does not demand of us to love our rivals and our conquerors. I was reading a French novel the other day—a very correct one, however, I beg to say—in which the heroine is described as charming all mankind, save one, which, says the author, naturally involved her having all the women against her.'

'And who was the hard-hearted exception among the gentlemen?'

'It was her husband.' He shook the caster, again keeping his eyes upon the board. '*Quatre, cinq!*' cried he. 'I've hit your blot at last. But here is your uncle.—Mr Magus, you are just in time to save Mrs Tyndall from utter rout.' For she had risen abruptly from the table, and evidently meant to play no more. There had been a certain sympathetic tone in those words, 'It was her husband,' which she could not miss; it had startled her, and yet she was not altogether angry with him for sympathising with her. It was not to be expected that Arthur's treatment of her (that was the way she looked at it, never from his point of view) should pass unnoticed; and, doubtless, Mr Allardyce, as a friend and a man of refined nature, pitied and felt for her. Why should he not? She could not tell; and yet she was—not annoyed, exactly, but—well, his doing so, or, at all events, his letting her know that he did so, had given her an uncomfortable feeling. She felt glad, as she had not felt before, that Uncle Magus had come in and spoiled their *tête-à-tête*. Mr Allardyce, on the contrary, was more put out by his arrival than usual, and after a few commonplace, left the room. Alone with Uncle Magus, she seemed somehow to breathe more freely; and yet she had a vague sense of oppression still, for which she could not account.

'It does not rain now, uncle. Suppose we take a walk in the garden.'

'We two?' said he in well-pleased, yet half-incredulous tones. 'By all means, my dear. That is,' he added, 'if you think it quite prudent.'

She had been ailing lately; the situation of Swansdale was damp; and she had constant colds.

The old man's solicitude, which the intonation of his voice expressed even more than his words, touched her.

'Oh, it won't hurt me, uncle,' said she; 'and I should so like it. I shall not be a minute putting on my bonnet and shawl.'

'Mind you wrap up well, dear. I shall never be forgiven, you know, by somebody, if I cause you to catch cold.'

He was very tender to her this ancient fire-eater, but also so loyal to Arthur, that he would never omit saying a good word for him. Well, that shewed he felt the necessity for defending him, and was, in fact, a sort of confession of her husband's ill-conduct towards her. Still, she would not let his words pass by without comment.

'I do not know who the "somebody" is, Uncle

Magus. I don't know anybody who would be more sorry, or perhaps so sorry, as yourself, if I took harm.'

'Quite right, dear, quite right. It was your husband I was thinking of; but it is no wonder that you mistook me; it was foolish to speak of him in that way, because he is your very self. You and he are one, of course. Wrap up warm, my dear, wrap up warm.'

Was this mere kindly simplicity in the old man, or was he determined not to see her meaning? She did not pursue the subject, but went to her room and dressed. As she came down-stairs, she heard some one cough above her, and looking up, saw Mr Allardyce leaning over the banisters.

'You are going on duty?' said he softly, and with a little laugh.

'Uncle Magus has asked me to have a little walk with him in the garden.'

'How I envy you!' answered he.

'Then won't you come with us?'

'No; thank you. *Au revoir!*' He put his fingers to his lips, and went back, with his usual almost noiseless tread, into the smoking-room to his beloved cigarettes.

Again that feeling of oppression came over her, and she stopped at the drawing-room door, with her hand upon her heart. Why had she told him that Uncle Magus had asked her to walk with him, when the exact contrary had been the case? Had she been afraid to vex him by saying that she had proposed it herself? She dismissed these questions as soon as asked, for they made her tremble. What she did reflect upon was, how very rude of him it had been to say: 'How I envy you,' since it presupposed that they two held in common a contempt for the old man, who, whatever his faults, had always shewn himself her friend—of late, her only friend. Again, if it was not a downright rudeness in him to kiss his fingers to her, it was certainly an unwarrantable liberty. In his very *Au revoir*, too—innocent as the phrase was—there had surely been an unpleasant significance. For the future, she would keep this agreeable gentleman at a distance.

Uncle Magus was not a great conversationalist at any time, but to-day he was more silent than ever. They walked on the terrace and underneath the box-tree wall, and nothing was to be heard but the craunch of their feet in the wet gravel; and yet the old man, who had her arm in his, kept pressing it and patting it, as though, since words had failed him, he would thereby express his solicitude and affection for her. Presently, they heard the report of a fowling-piece—a damp thud in the misty air, which the chalk-pit echoed dully.

'That is Arthur's gun,' said Uncle Magus. 'He is firing it off just before coming in.'

The old man's voice had an air of gladness, as it seemed to Helen, which jarred upon her. Why should he feel pleasure to know that her husband was coming home, when she felt none, or pleasure that was so mixed with wrath that it was next to none? In reality, if she could have read her companion's mind, it was not so much gladdened as relieved by the fact in question. He felt as the faithful watch-dog feels who has been on guard over the flock all day, and at last sees the shepherd coming.

'Do you know Arthur's gun by the mere report of it, Uncle Magus?'

'Yes, my dear. Just as old Giles knows what tree he is near at night, by the sound that the wind makes in its branches. Have you never seen my guns? Well, a shower is coming on, and my cottage is nearer than the Hall; so come in, and see them. You shall be back home again in time to meet Arthur.'

'I daresay he will survive it even if I am not,' said she.

The old man stopped, and looked at her fixedly, then shook his gray head, and walked on. He had evidently something to say to her, but mistrusted his own powers of expression. 'I would speak,' said his look; 'but I am but a blunt speaker, and I might make things worse than they are.'

Late as it was in the season, quite winter-time, in fact, there were still a few roses about the cottage. Its cleanliness and neatness were such as are only to be found in houses exclusively inhabited by males; not, of course, that man, in general, is so neat as woman, but when, from choice or necessity, he is neat, he eclipses her altogether. Into the tiny 'lobby,' with its tall clock and floor of snow-white stone; and into the little oak-panelled parlour, with its one picture—a portrait of Arthur as a child—Helen had been introduced, of course; but in the adjoining chamber, to which she was now invited, she had never yet set foot. It was a sign that you were a favourite indeed with Uncle Magus when you were admitted to his private bower. This was also oak-panelled, and though a bedroom, had an air of greater comfort and 'liveability' about it than its neighbour chamber. A round table with a huge desk, covered with manuscripts, stood in front of the fireplace, and beside it a high-backed arm-chair, curiously carved.

'Why, Uncle Magus, you must be an author,' cried Helen laughingly; 'you must certainly be writing a book. What is it all about?' and she stepped forward to satisfy her curiosity.

'No, Helen; you must not read that,' said the old man, stretching forth his long arm, and turning the papers over face downward, 'for you would misunderstand it. It is a book, but not for ladies' eyes. That is, I mean,' added the old gentleman hastily, and colouring like a girl, 'it is upon a subject unfitted for the exercise of their judgment, being the Duello.—There are the guns.'

He pointed to two guns hung above the chimney-piece; one, a fowling-piece, about which there seemed nothing remarkable, though, to the owner's eyes, it doubtless revived many a palmy day on moor and stubble. He took it down, and looked at it affectionately. 'Do you suppose I should not know the voice of this old friend, or ever mistake it for a stranger's? *That*'—he nodded his head towards the other, an old-fashioned weapon splendidly ornamented in gold and silver—'*that*, I believe, was the first gun ever used by any member of our race. It has descended from father to son, from son to grandson, I know not for how many generations: it will now, alas!' added he with a deep sigh, 'descend no longer.'

'And these pistols—are they very ancient also, Uncle Magus?' Two of these weapons were hanging beneath the guns, long in the handle, short in the barrel, and somewhat clumsy-looking.

'No, my dear; at least I can remember their being made. My father gave them to me upon the day I came of age. There are no gewgaws about

them; but they have been very serviceable in their time, and would be so again, should there be any necessity for their use.'

'Lor, Uncle Magus, there will be no robbers at Swansdale, I do hope.'

'I hope not, my dear, I'm sure,' answered he; then added, after a little pause: 'if there *were* to be one, it would be bad for him.'

There was a certain vengeful quiet in that addition to the old man's speech—a sort of chained ferocity—that curiously agitated his companion. Her mother had always said that, 'for her part, that Mr Maggot frightened her to death,' but Helen had never been frightened at him until now. She knew that he was not talking of robbers that steal gold and silver.

'Is that another gun,' said she with affected sprightliness, 'in yonder case?'

'No, Helen. Did your husband never tell you what it was?'

'O yes, I remember. Oh, Uncle Magus, I am so sorry!' She now recollected, though, in her hurry to change the conversation, it had not occurred to her, how Arthur had told her that this singular personage kept the body of his only son embalmed in his bedchamber. The old man took no notice of her embarrassment; but his eyes—which were fixed on the object in question, a mahogany box, looking not unlike what she had taken it for, with brazen clasps about the lid, and brass-work round the key-hole—filled gradually with tears. 'I am so very sorry, Uncle Magus,' repeated Helen. She laid her hand upon his arm, and gently led him to the arm-chair, wherein he dropped rather than seated himself. Her own fears and troubles were quite forgotten in her contemplation of the old man's agony—tears from such eyes had something awful in them.

'My only, *only* son—my heart's own treasure!' he murmured. 'May Heaven grant, my dear, that your children may have a better end. I had cherished the dream—it was but a dream, they tell me, but it made me happy—that some day my boy would have regained the inheritance of his fathers. I *kept* our ancient title-deeds—but no matter; they are waste-paper now even in my eyes. I thought, at least, to see him grow up and wed, and hoped, before I died, to dandle on my knees his offspring; but the old tree has died out, root and branch.'

There was silence in the little room. Helen was kneeling at the old man's feet, herself in tears, not on his account only. If she had borne within her the promise of offspring of her own, how different she felt would her life be to her; what content, notwithstanding its troubles, would have blessed her present; what happiness would have seemed in store for her in the future. A child, she had read, endears a mother to its father, and to the mother makes the father doubly dear.

'Do you know how my boy died, Helen?' continued the old man in trembling tones.

'O yes, I know. Don't speak of it,' she whispered. 'It is too terrible even to think of. Poor lad, poor lad, poor Uncle Magus.'

'Yet it might have been worse, my dear, both for him and for me.'

'Worse?' echoed she in astonishment. 'Worse than what Arthur told me? That is impossible.'

'Not so, Helen,' said the old man very tenderly, yet no longer with agitation. 'He might have

grown up and wed'— He hesitated, then stopped, and once more she saw in his face that look of mistrust in himself which she had noticed in the garden.

'A wicked woman,' suggested she.

'No, no; my lad would never have done that, Helen; but he might have married one who, though she loved him dearly, might have misunderstood and vexed him, and he her; and—though there had never been any real ground of quarrel between them—the breach might have widened daily, hourly, till it was very wide. Then—Are you listening, Helen?'

'Yes,' whispered she, she was.

'Then, when they were thus apart, some smooth-tongued scoundrel, full of lures and smiles, might by degrees have interposed himself between them, and, ere she had scarce dreamed of harm'— Here a bell rang at the cottage-door. Helen rose hastily to her feet, very pale and trembling. 'Rather than she were harmed by such a villain,' continued Uncle Magus steadily, 'being the wife of son of mine, I say that I prefer to see him as he is, a withered corpse, and to know that he died, as he did, of want, than lived to bear such shame.'

'Uncle Magus, Uncle Magus, I have brought you some birds,' cried Arthur's cheery voice in the other room. 'Where are you?'

'Will you see him?' asked Uncle Magus with his eyes.

'No, no,' she answered; 'not just now. I could not.'

Then, covering her face with her hands, she sank down in the chair that the old man had quitted, while he went out to Arthur, taking care to close the door behind him.

### POLISH CUSTOMS.

THERE is perhaps no more distinguishing sign of the age than the rapid disappearance of such old customs as have in themselves nothing useful to recommend them. The Maypole has ceased to attract the peasant, and the lord of the village no longer deigns to choose the May-queen for his partner on the green. Good old customs in a great measure went out with the stage-coaches, and will probably remain as extinct as those cumbersome relics of the past. But while in England this decay of national customs is sweeping away the memories of 'the good old times,' there is a people in Europe who cling with tenacity to the customs and habits of their ancestors. The Poles—that brave, chivalrous, but most unhappy people—may well, indeed, cling to their national observances, for it is all that is left to remind them of the days of their freedom. A brief sketch of some of their principal customs may, perhaps, interest the readers of this Journal. We will begin with a Polish Christmas—a season which we have so shorn of its religious glories as to have turned it into a day of good things, nothing more. The eve, as in all Catholic countries, is observed as a strict fast until about four o'clock, or, in some places, until the first star glimmers in the winter sky. Then the collation is served. It consists of *nine* courses, in honour of the nine choirs of angels. The first course is always milk-soup, flavoured with almonds, and very sweet; then two or three kinds of fish, macaroni, winter salad, potatoes,

cakes, or rather a kind of pancake; and lastly, a pudding, strongly flavoured with *poppies*. This last dish is *de rigueur*, and even the poorest family contrives to have a small quantity. It is eaten cold. Under each plate is placed a small wisp of hay or straw, to call to mind the manger about to be occupied by the Holy Babe. During the repast, hymns are sung by the assembled family; master and mistress, children and servants, unite their voices in that song of praise which two thousand years ago awoke the echoes on the plains of Bethlehem: 'Gloria! Gloria in excelsis!'

The poppy-pudding having been duly honoured, all adjourn to the *crèche* (or manger), which has been prepared in another room, to the intense delight of the little ones of the family, who, however, are not excluded from the preparation of it. The Christmas tree is prepared *en cachette*, but the *crèche* is the children's work. It is, of course, lighted and adorned according to the means and taste of the family. Generally, however, it is very simple, being as near as we can imagine a just representation of the stable in which 'Mary brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.' All remain a few minutes in silent prayer, after which such gifts as have been prepared for the poor are distributed; and many a ragged child goes home well clothed and fed, and blessing in her little heart that Poor Babe lying in the straw, in whose sacred name the clothes were given her. After this, the little ones, happy and tired, go to bed, and their elders prepare to attend the midnight mass—

That only night in all the year

Sees the stoled priest the chalice rear.

Christmas Day is observed here as Sunday in England. The same repast is served as on the preceding day, save that the courses of fish are replaced by meat. On the feast of St John, it is usual for the priest to offer a little wine to each person presenting himself at the altar-rails after mass, in memory of the *charity* which so particularly distinguished the Beloved Apostle.

The Eve of Easter has also its special observance. After the strict fast of the Holy Week, great preparations are made for the re-strengthening of the vital forces. As the angels descended to open the tomb, their ministry is honoured by the presence of the nine courses. They are not, however, served one after the other, as on Christmas Eve, but are all placed on the table at once. This is done because the Easter Feast is prepared on Holy Saturday, and is *blessed* by the priest on that day. About four o'clock in the afternoon, the priest may be seen, in surplice and stole, passing from house to house, accompanied by an acolyte. He sprinkles holy water over the outspread feast, and pronounces the usual form of benediction. The Easter dish, if we may so call it, the one found on the tables of the rich and poor alike, is a large flat cake, about an inch thick, plentifully sprinkled with currants, almonds, and white sugar. It forms generally the *Bénit* of the poor. The *Baba*, a coarse sponge-cake, when saturated with wine, is not bad, but those who dislike saffron must not touch it, as it tastes very strong of that herb. In these latitudes, it is very rare to see *lamb* at Easter, but the middle of the table is generally adorned with an *Agnus* in sugar. The *boar's head* is not

often absent, and ham in abundance is provided. Why so much *pork* should be eaten at Easter, I cannot say, unless it be that the guests invited to each *bénit* being numerous, it is an economy to kill a fat pig.

Before sitting down to table, the host and hostess offer to each person a small piece of cold, hard egg, expressing a hope to see him or her at the *bénit* next year. The guest eats the piece of egg, and kisses the fair hand that offers it. We have omitted to state that the same ceremony precedes the Christmas feast, only, instead of the egg, an uncut and unconsecrated host is offered, from which each person breaks a small piece, and eats it standing.

A Polish funeral strikes an English eye as being a very disorderly affair. In England, all is done 'decently and in order'; the coffin with its flowing pall, the mourners walking 'with solemn step and slow' behind the corpse. Here, on the contrary, the *bare* coffin is placed on an open hearse, on each side of which walk the undertaker's men, dressed in a long black coat bordered with white cord (the sign of mourning), and hats of an indescribable shape; neither round nor square, neither straight nor crooked, *unique* of their kind. The funeral procession—I speak of a Catholic funeral—is opened by a boy bearing a large crucifix; he is followed by the priest or priests; then such male friends as choose to bear tapers; then the hearse, followed by the female mourners and a miscellaneous crowd, pushing and jostling, praying or quarrelling, according to their disposition, all rushing and striving to be nearest the body. Arrived at the grave (the corpse is rarely taken to a church), the office for the dead is said or sung, and then the nearest relative present throws the first handful of mould on the coffin, saying: 'May the earth rest lightly on thee.' It will easily be imagined, that when performed solemnly and reverently, this action is profoundly touching. That the first earth which falls on the coffin of a parent should be placed there by the trembling hand of the son, and with that earth should fall the tear of filial grief, is a custom so full of real feeling, that we could wish it were adopted by ourselves. But alas! no sooner has this first handful been thrown in, than the crowd push forward, each scratching up a handful of earth and throwing it pell-mell into the grave. The scene is too disgusting to describe. The last time I assisted at a funeral, I saw men, women, and children, beggars by the score, all pushing and screaming around the open grave. The grave-digger, tired of waiting until these had done jostling and fighting, at last jumped into the grave, and stamped down with his feet the superincumbent earth. This curious mixture of reverence and disorder is not confined to funeral solemnities. To spit on the church floor, or to dispense with a pocket-handkerchief during mass, is a usual habit, not only with the poor peasants, but with persons who ought to know better. Yet, in spite of this, nothing strikes a stranger's eye more forcibly than 'the exterior devotion of the Poles.' It is an everyday occurrence, and especially during Lent, to see women lying flat on their faces in the middle of the church with their arms stretched out so as to form a cross, during the whole service, a long sermon included. Of course people are obliged to step over them to reach their places. The exceeding

indelicality of such a proceeding requires no comment; but to those who inquire why the Polish peasantry of this nineteenth century are still as ignorant, as superstitious, as credulous as those of the sixteenth, it affords a clue to the answer. The peasants are not allowed to have any *self-respect*; they still consider themselves as beings inferior to their masters, and, in consequence, not permitted to aspire to a higher degree of civilisation. All their relations with their employers tend to foster this sad state of things. Their cottages are holes such as no English farmer would permit a labourer to inhabit. Their bed is straw, sometimes stuffed into a piece of sacking, but more often spread on the bare earth. The tables and stools are of the rudest description; and as to household comfort, it is unknown. It will hardly be credited, but it is a fact, that many of the peasants prefer this state of *piggery* (pardon the word, reader; it is the only right one), because it is an exact contrast to the condition of the German peasant. Once let a Pole imagine that anything sensible or practicable is German, and he will refuse to use it. As a case in point, I may state that the German children have light and yet capacious knapsacks strapped to their shoulders in which they carry their books, copy-books, &c. to school. I once ventured to suggest to a Polish lady the utility and comfort of this knapsack. The child holds himself straight, his hands are free, in case of rain, to carry his umbrella, and his books are spared many a tumble into the mud or snow. Never shall I forget the air of disdain with which she said: '*My son is not a German!*' A few minutes afterwards, 'my son' passed through the room with his books and slate tucked under his arm. Before he reached the hall-door, two very distinct cracks told the fate of the slate, and back came the boy for a piece of string to tie the whole together. It is patriotic not to use a knapsack.

We should omit one most important and universal custom, if we did not say a word about *begging*. If you pass along the high-road during harvest, or at any other season when the labourers are employed in the fields, the instant they perceive you are a stranger, they snatch up a little hay or corn, or even a green bough, and lay it in the middle of the road, a few paces from your horse's feet, at the same time repeating an *Ave Maria* as fast and as loud as possible. If you give them anything, they will kiss your feet or the hem of your dress in the most servile manner, invoking numberless blessings on your head. If you refuse, they will call you a *German*, but, as a rule, the peasantry do not swear on these occasions.

The dress of the peasant-women in that part of Poland known as Prussian Poland is not picturesque. How to attain an immense circumference of petticoat, seems to be their prevailing desire. No crinoline, even when in the height of fashion, ever gave such a perfect roundness to the form as the dozen thick wadded petticoats which these women pile one upon another in winter. In the summer months, they wear only one, but that is wadded so thickly as to stand alone. We may add that nature's wadding does not fail them, as they are short, and often fat, but in general very pretty, having open and engaging countenances, with laughing eyes and good



teeth. Having succeeded in making herself as round as a butter-tub, a Polish-Prussian peasant proceeds to cover her head with a white cap—not a mob-cap nor a night-cap, something between. Round this cap she passes a broad and many-coloured ribbon, which is tied in a formidable bow at the back of her head. A radiant silk handkerchief encircles her shoulders, and is fastened in front with a brooch—often of gold. A large cross or crucifix is always a conspicuous ornament, and is an heirloom from which, save under the pressure of the greatest poverty, they do not part. During the summer months, they wear an immense bonnet, perfectly destitute of any trimming or lining, and resembling in form those patronised by the Antwerp market-women. This bonnet is taken off when its wearer enters a church, and is placed on the floor or bench beside her. The bodies of their short but extensive dresses are invariably made tight, but the sleeves are what the dressmakers call *gigot de mouton*. And very fine legs of mutton they are! The costume is completed by a large apron, sometimes of white muslin, shoes, and stockings. These latter appear only on Sundays—for eight months in the year they go barefoot. The foregoing remarks do not apply to the men of the country. They are not so good-looking as the women. Their eyes are large, deep-set, and have a sad, melancholy look; the cheek-bones high, the face long and thin. Their hair and moustaches are worn long, the latter in particular. Their dress in summer is a suit of blue cloth, the coat very long, almost touching the ground, with ample skirts, which are gathered at the waist like a woman's gown. The trousers are stuffed into great black boots. We may remark that the priests, even the canons and the bishop, wear top-boots. The peasants' hats resemble those worn by the French abbés. As a sign of mourning, they have *white* instead of blue or black piping-cord round the edges of the sleeves and collars of their coats. The upper classes wear the same, and the ladies have a band of white round the skirts (about half-way up) of their black dresses. For three months after his marriage, a bridegroom wears a bunch of flowers in his hat.

## WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY.

## IN THIRTY-FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER VI.

I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking.

AMONG the advantages of being the first man in a village, may be counted that you may share all the honours of greatness with those who are much higher in the social hierarchy than yourself. The mayor of Stodge-in-the-Hole may call the Lord Mayor of London brother, the tiniest German Princekin may share with the Emperor of the Germans the honours due to royalty. Thus, Evan Rowlands, the banker, although not in anyway eminent, yet, as being the head man in his own county—the landed proprietors being mostly non-resident, and only appearing at times of elections—enjoyed the consideration and esteem which men usually give to those who dispense the gifts they desire. For any ordinary country wedding, the services of the rector of the parish, assisted by

some other clergyman, would have sufficed; for the banker's son, no less a person than the bishop of the diocese had consented to officiate. On the whole, the county was delighted. The very dissenters wanted to borrow money sometimes, as frequently they had money to deposit, so that Evan was on the best of terms with them, although kept by his daughters in the strict paths of the church; and they felt flattered and appeased at the compliment paid to their class and clan by the bishop's offer to marry Arthur Williams and Mary Roberts. Kate and Winny were fervent upon the matter. It might eventually be the means of reconciling the Welsh to the church of their fathers; who could say what blessed results might not flow from this episcopal condescension!

Bear in mind that the bishop in Wales is of vastly more importance to his clergy and their friends than any English bishop to his flock. He is the dispenser of nearly all the patronage of his diocese. By meekness, devoutness, and pleasing his bishop, the poorest curate may rise to comfortable preferment in his church. If he eschews *cwru dda*\* on the one hand, and ritualism on the other—if he be not too learned for the bishop, or too independent for the bishop's wife, his path of life upwards is pretty well secured.

The flutter of expectation and anxiety that accompanies the advent of a bishop in Wales is therefore great. The village of Llanfechan is astir, for the bishop is coming this day to pay a visit to their rector, and the wedding is to take place on the day after the morrow.

It had been arranged that a deputation of the clergy should meet the bishop at the nearest station, and escort him with all due honours to Llanfechan. Unfortunately, a mistake was made. There were two stations almost equidistant from the village. The bishop alighted at the first; the clergy were waiting for him at the second. Unfortunately, too, it happened that the clergy were not entirely unrepresented at the first station. The Rev. Owen Gwyar was there; and His Reverence was one of the old school. A little harmless ruse had been planned by his brother clergy to get him out of the way, as he insisted on claiming his privilege of joining their procession; he had been sent to the wrong station. In this case it turned out to be the right one, for there the bishop alighted.

Owen Gwyar was the lees of a man, who had been in some sort a scholar and a gentleman; but all that then had been about him of good manners and good breeding had long since burnt away, leaving only the dregs of what had been a character. The Gwyars were formerly of the old Welsh gentry, inhabiting a gray old stone house on the flank of a hill, which had a long avenue of stag-headed, hide-bound trees leading up to it, a grove of firs about it for shelter, a fish-pond and a sheep-cot hard by, a barn, a kiln, a stable, and a sty for the pigs. Law and liquor had lost them their lands. Owen was the last of the race; the curate of a chapelry on the hills he had held for forty

\* *Cwru dda*, good ale.

years. In his early days, he had spent the small remains of his humble patrimony in ruffling with the young bloods of the principality. He had drunk and gamed with wild John Mytton, had shared his mad pranks, had officiated as chaplain at many unseemly revels. Now a shaking, dilapidated old man—sober perforce, except when a neighbouring squire gave a feast or an old friend would stand treat—he found himself alone in a new world of primness and propriety, hard put to it even to retain the small pittance that kept him from starvation. Thus, in addition to the fear they had that Owen would disgrace his cloth, and scandalise the bishop by some wild and wicked conduct at his visit, his brother clergy had also the kindly motive of screening him from the consequences of episcopal anger. His present conduct would hardly bear investigation: fortunately, there was no one to complain of him. His parishioners were used to him, and didn't mind his occasional inebriety. Anything could be pardoned to a man who had a good heart; besides, all the sober ones went to chapel.

The bishop put his head out of the window at the Llanfyrion station, and seeing a tall and gentlemanly clergyman—for, up to a certain point, and when got up for such an occasion as the present, Owen was eminently good-looking—he mildly said: 'One of my clergy, I think. Is it here I alight for Llanfechan?'

'It is, my lord,' said Owen, motioning the station-master to open the door of the carriage.

'And will you see if there is a carriage waiting here for me?'

'Your lordship had better send a servant to look,' said Owen. To the last he retained a punctiliousness of personal dignity that was in odd contrast to his usual manners and actual circumstances.

His lordship's domestic chaplain, who had been looking out at the wrong side, here alighted, and came to the rescue. 'How do do? Delighted to see you,' he said, shaking Owen by the hand. 'Is your carriage here for his lordship?'

'My carriage is very much at his service,' said Owen, relaxing a little.

'Then I'll see all the luggage out, if you'll get his lordship to the carriage.'

'Mind they don't forget that hat-box,' cried the bishop.

'I'll see to the hat-box, if your lordship will go and take your seat.'

'But I'm uneasy about that hat-box; you know you left it behind last week.'

'Is it the mitre your lordship carries in the hat-box?' inquired Owen gravely.

'N'n'no; in fact, it's my wideawake hat. When I come among these beautiful mountains, I love to wander about, forgetting my heavy burdens and responsibilities for a while—in a wideawake hat, you know—it *strengthens* one so, for renewed exertion.'

'Is it in the head, then, your lordship feels the weakness?' said Owen.

'Eh?' cried the bishop sharply.—'Where's my old friend Roberts, eh? Why doesn't he come to meet me?—Well, well; have you got the hat-box all right, Rowlands?—That's well.—Now, my dear sir, if you'll take me to your carriage.'

Owen gravely escorted the bishop from the platform, bowed to him with much dignity as they reached the road outside. 'I shall do myself the

honour of driving your lordship to your destination.'

Owen Gwyar's carriage had once been a dog-cart—the body of it, that is—a tandem dog-cart which had come to grief amongst the hills, the body of which had been too much shattered to make it worth taking away. Owen had mended this himself with splints of wood and iron nails: the axle and springs were undeniably good, having belonged to the *Flyaway* coach, dismantled and broken up since the opening of the line. One of the wheels, too, had belonged to the old coach; its fellow had been too rotten, and its place was supplied by a new one, made by the village blacksmith. They were as near pairs as could be expected—not so much in appearance, because the one was painted a bright red, whilst the other was not painted at all—a difficulty having arisen as to the pecuniary advance requisite for procuring the paint; but they were a very fair match in size. The near wheel was the smaller, but the consequent tendency of the carriage to roll in that direction was counteracted by the habits of the parson's Galloway, which persistently jibbed to the offside. The pony, whose legs bore the marks of long and faithful service, had, in honour of the bishop's visit, been treated with a feed of corn that morning by Thomas, the village publican; his consequent gaiety of heart had led him to roll copiously in the tavern dung-heap; his long rough coat had defied the efforts of Thomas, who was pressed for time, and whose currycomb had lost its teeth, to bring to even decent cleanliness.

Thomas stood at the pony's head, passing his fingers through her knotted mane, grinning and nodding at the bishop. 'We'd have had her beautifully clean, if we knew a day or two sooner—yes, indeed. You spik Cymraeg?—Eh no? What you no spik Cymraeg for?'

'Is this the carriage, eh?' said the bishop, eyeing it doubtfully through his eyeglass.

'I'd have brought the chariot, if I'd known I should have the honour of driving your lordship.'

'Is it quite safe?'

'Oh, she ferry safe; you not be afraid. You get in gently—she'll not preak.'

'But what about the luggage?' said the chaplain in dismay.

'We shall have room for his lordship's hat-box,' said Owen. 'The luggage can follow in a cart.'

'But where am I to sit? There's no back-seat,' cried the chaplain.

'Oh, jump in,' said Owen; 'there's a bag of chaff in the corner.'

'Well, really,' said the bishop, having sat down and arranged his skirts, 'this is very primitive and delightful: it really reminds one of Baldwin's pilgrimage through the land, so pleasantly commemorated by Giraldus, when he came to preach the Crusades—eh, my dear brother?'

'And to bring us into subjection to English bishops,' said Owen gruffly, for he was strong on the independence of the British Church. 'Gee hup, old mare.'

The old mare was not inclined to gee up, but persisted in backing into the hedge.

Thomas had to drag her forcibly into the middle of the road, then, by a judicious mixture of kicks, threats, and blandishments, he induced her to start, and after she had started, he jumped on to

the step on the bishop's side, holding on by the top of the cart.

'Don't you think the springs might give way, eh?' said the bishop, feeling the grinding of the axle against the floor of the cart, the vehicle being down on its very marrow-bones with the weight upon it.

'O no; ferry goot springs, and plenty rope to mend them.—Go ahet, Owen; go ahet.—Hoo, hoo! tschee, tschee!'

Uttering wild cries to keep the pony in motion, Thomas clung on to the side of the cart till they reached a little village of stone huts, through which ran a sparkling rivulet. When they came to the *Gwydir Arms*, a stone hut a little bigger than the rest, the pony threw up his head with a snort, and came to a stop so suddenly, that the bishop lost his balance, and would have fallen upon the horse's crupper, but for the outstretched arm of Thomas.

The bishop shook his head. These were not the habits of a well-regulated clerical pony.

'Will you have a glass with me?' cried Thomas. 'I very pleased to treat you all. Come.'

'Nagoddy wear diolch vaur frend,' said the bishop, airing his scanty Welsh.

'What! you spik Cymraeg?' cried Thomas, seizing him by the hand and shaking it violently. 'Why not you say so before, eh? Come, I treat you to a glass for that; all the clergy come and drink wid me.'

'No, no; thanks—many thanks!' cried the bishop. 'I never take anything before luncheon.'

'Indeed, I'm getting thundering dry,' growled Owen, irritated by this long irrational discussion. 'Bring us a jug of your best, Thomas, and no more words.'

Owen was in that state of preparedness that the jug of ale he took at the *Gwydir Arms* had the effect of quite overbalancing his faculties. A further contest with the obstinate pony also enraged him; and as he drove away from the village, and took the mountain road that led to Llanfechan, he began to mutter and growl to himself in a way quite alarming. Still, they were making good progress; it could not be many miles to Llanfechan. The bishop devoutly hoped that they might arrive there without accident.

They had now reached a higher part of the road, where the snow lay in masses on each side, piled up in banks, which the frost had hardened into the consistency of iron; the pony began to flag, and Owen, jumping to his feet in the cart, flourished the whip round his head in rage, and commenced to lash the pony furiously. The tip of the lash caught the bishop in the eye, and altogether his lordship's patience began to fail him.

'Gently, gently, sir,' said the bishop: 'I have the greatest horror of reckless driving, and have never had a carriage accident in my life; and so—'

'What!' shouted Owen, 'were you never upset from a trap?'

'Never!' said the bishop firmly.

'Then, by Jupiter, you shall be for once!' cried Owen, letting go the pony's head for an instant. The pony, as was his habit, flung himself to the right; the red wheel of the carriage ran up the snowy bank, and, in the twinkling of an eye, the bishop and his chaplain were seated on the snow in an adjoining field *dos à dos*.

But help was near at hand. Roberts, finding the bishop had alighted at the wrong station, had despatched a carriage to meet him, riding on in advance himself.

'You are not hurt, my dear bishop?' Roberts exclaimed, jumping off his horse, and running to give him a helping hand to rise.

'I don't think I am,' said the bishop, feeling himself all over: 'the snow has broken my fall so well that I scarcely feel shaken at all.'

'Most providential indeed,' said Roberts.

The bishop thankfully took his seat in Roberts' well-appointed carriage.

'That unfortunate man, is he hurt?'

'He is in a kind of stupor, but I don't think it's from the accident. My groom will stop and take care of him. How could you be so imprudent as to trust yourself with him, my dear bishop? He's a perfect lunatic when—you know,' said Roberts, shrugging his shoulders.

'I didn't know, I didn't know,' said the bishop meekly. 'Let us be thankful it is no worse.'

The carriage drove off, and Owen was left sitting supported against the bank, looking vacantly about him.

'Whose servant are you?' he said at last to the groom.

'Mr Roberts', sir.'

'Bring my carriage.'

The carriage had righted itself; and the old pony, after her first fright, finding exertion uncalled for, had stopped by the road-side, and was now plannatively nibbling at the dead twigs of a bush.

'I'd better drive you home, sir.'

'Bring my carriage, and then go after your master; do you hear?'

The shock had really sobered Owen; and so, having helped him into his carriage, the groom rode off homewards. Owen turned his horse's head towards the village he had left; but after a little he fell into a brown-study, his grasp of the reins relaxed, the pony slackened his pace unnoticed, came to a walk, then to a complete stand-still. Still Owen noticed nothing, but sat in a sort of dream. He was thinking of days long past, of the possibilities of life that had been his, of his wretched miserable state, and yet, at the end of his bitter thoughts, he smiled and looked up. He looked round at the dreary wintry landscape; every rock was familiar to him, every cranny in the hill-side, every fastness of the mountains. There, in the brook hard by, had they hunted the otter many a merry day; then had the hills echoed to their shouts, to the eager baying of their dogs. And there, over those round-backed hills and along that steep mountain-ridge, had they followed the fox with wild cry and tuneful horn, many a time and oft in days of yore, when stout Sir Robert led the field, arrayed in scarlet glory. And the nights—ye gods, the nights! when the harp rang loudly in the hall, and the song went round from groom to lord, the sweet Penillion, the rousing chorus! The old man's head sank upon his breast, and his eyes suffused with tears. They were all gone, these stout men and mighty hunters of old; a new world had come in, a world of coldness, rigour, and gloom!

'My old days are very hard to me,' he said, dashing his hand across his face. 'What an old fool I am! and to go and upset the bishop too, like a madman. Ah, it was John Mytton served me

just that same trick when he was driving me to Bryn; ah, how many years ago!' His eye once more ranged over the snowy landscape, and fixed itself on one black spot hovering in the air. 'That's old Bannoch the raven; what has he got for supper to-night, I wonder? There's a sheep lying there with a broken leg, I'll bet, just under Craigddu.' The mournful croak of the raven was borne upon the wind. 'Ah! my friend, you'll feast to-night. I know by your voice you've something lying there waiting for you. Amongst those stones, I expect, by the old Roman station.' Owen bent his head and listened, for he fancied he heard a faint cry; but whether it was the shout of man, or the bark of dog, or the shrill whistle of scampering sheep, or but the brattle of the impatient stream, he couldn't tell, so faint and far the voice, whatever it might be. There was no other sound, and Owen gathered up his reins and drove on.

#### ON THE HILL.

WELCOME, once more, dear mount of solitude!  
Loved tower of happy sights and musings! Here  
We mingle with a blessed brotherhood  
Of trees, flowers, bees, and other objects near;  
And with yon hills, and that cerulean sphere.  
We move among the speechless, yet we talk—  
Not by the tongue, but by the eye and ear—  
With all that charm us on this airy walk,  
Down from the kingly sky, to every blooming stalk.

This hill recalls the Past; these slopes, that brow,  
Were once alive with armed thousands, who,  
Scorning beneath a tyrant king to bow,  
Who strove their Rights of Conscience to undo,  
Came hither, and unrolled their banner blue  
In the Invader's face. On yonder mound,  
Whose camp-like lines still draw the curious view,  
Stood Leslie's tent, and, in great rings around,  
Ran tents and warriors over all the embattled ground.

Since then, two hundred years have stamped their  
changes,  
Few on this hill, but many o'er that plain,  
As the pleased eye discovers while it ranges  
O'er the once waste, now rich in grass and grain,  
And decked with recent wood, and tower, and fane,  
And that old Border town's new-fledged wings,  
Nestled among yon trees, through which the train,  
Waving its smoky pennon, weird-like springs,  
Like some huge dragon on its daily journeyings!

How sweet the air tastes on this goodly top!  
How swift the eye flies o'er that pictured vale!  
Like a young eagle, joying in the scope  
For his strong wing. Hail, ye green pastures! hail,  
Ye brighter corn-fields, hued with emerald pale!  
And hail, ye woods, from whose embowering shades  
The stately mansion towers! Hail, clouds, that sail  
With the soft summer shower, and come like maids,  
Who bring the fountain to the thirsty leaves and  
blades!

And hail, ye scenes of ancient Border war!  
Ye Cheviot Hills, that gaze stern Flodden o'er!  
And thou, Hume Castle, in the west afar,  
And Berwick town, dim on yon eastern shore—  
Ah, once ye flowed with streams of human gore!  
And war rang round you also, Eildons three;  
But you, brave builders of the days of yore,  
And Thomas True, beneath the fairy tree,  
And Scott, have crowned with nobler immortality!

Lo! now the sun with western brilliance breaks,  
And sullen Cheviot, smit as with a spell,  
All down his side, with radiant laughter shakes,  
And bloomed with splendour is his vaward dell,  
'Gainst which the purple peak of Yeavinger Bell,  
And all her sister peaks, in clear outline,  
Loom forth. O light and shade! what muse can tell  
With what a magic pencil ye define  
The distant, formless mass, and there make beauty  
shine!

The vale of Tweed a molten river washes,  
Which lake-like o'er the distant east expands,  
A thousand panes are bright with fiery flashes,  
And every blade burns o'er the emerald lands;  
How king-like in the glare huge Twisel stands!  
And, Berwick town, though thou art far away,  
Standing obscurely on Northumbrian sands,  
We see, amid the dazzling western ray,  
White waves and sails flash brilliant o'er thy azure  
bay.

Good-night! brave, healthful hill; and may the morn  
Be not far distant when again our feet  
Will walk amid the violets that adorn  
Thy grassy brow. Be oftentimes our retreat,  
Blessing our hearts, and pouring river sweet  
Of bracing air through all our panting veins,  
Raising our spirits to the mercy-seat  
With thankfulness to Him, who loving reigns,  
And round us pours the bliss of skies, and hills, and  
plains.

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